[Translation]

Increase in Price of Steel

*36 SHRI NITISH KUMAR :
JUSTICE GUMAN MAL LODHA :

Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state :

(a) whether the production cost of steel has increased due to the recent hike in the prices of petroleum, railway freight and coal;

(b) if so, the total percentage of increase in prices during the last six months due to above reasons;

(c) whether steel producing industries have increased the prices of their various steel products;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) whether the wages of workers have also been increased during the above period; and

(f) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA) : (a) Yes, Sir. In the case of Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) alone, it is estimated that the hike in prices of petroleum, railway freight and coal since 1.4.96 would have an annual impact o about Rs. 810 crores on the production cost of steel.

(b) to (d). Many steel producing industries have increased prices of various steel products since 1.4.96. SAIL has revised the prices w.e.f. 1.8.96 in order to partly neutralise the impact of increase in production cost, the average increase being Rs.200 to Rs.700 per metric tonne on representative categories.

(e) and (f). In case of SAIL and Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited (RINL), there has been no wage revision since 1.4.96except for normal increase in salaries and wages on account of promotions, increments, revision in Dearness Allowance, etc.

[English]

Shortage of Wagons

*37. DR KRUPASINDHU BHOI : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) the steps taken by the Government to meet the growing shortage of wagons;

(b) the estimated requirement of wagons at present;

(c) the sources through which required number of wagons are likely to be acquired; and

(d) steps taken by the Government in this regard so far?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN) : (a) Procurement of wagons is an annual exercise based on expected materialisation of freight traffic and efficiency of utilisation. Presently there is no shortage of wagons to meet the requirements of the core sector industries. Railways are taking steps to improve the wagons availability by :

(i) increasing procurement of wagons;

(ii) improving utilisation of assets;

(iii) encouraging customers to buy wagons under 'Own Your Wagons Scheme' (OYWS), etc.

(b) During the current financial year (1996-97), it has been planned to procure 25,000 wagons (in terms of Four Wheeler Units) to meet the demand. In addition 5000 wagons are also likely to be procured under Own Your Wagon Scheme. This will take care of the estimated requirements for the current year.

(c) and (d). For the year 1996-97, out of 25000 wagons, order have already been placed for 18905 wagons (four wheeler units), including 1900 wagons on Railway Workshops. Balance orders are under finalisation through tender.

The bulk of the wagons are procured by the Railways through order placed on Wagon India Ltd., a Joint Sector Undertaking under Ministry of Industry of which wagon building units in Public and Private Sectors are members. In addition, a small quantity of about 2000 wagons (in terms of four wheeler units) is ordered on Railway Workshops. Besides these, developmental orders have also been placed on the following firms by Ministry of Railways:

(i) M/s. Binny, Madras in 1993-94;

(ii) M/s. Sri Ranga Alloys Ltd., Coimbatore in 1995-96;

(iii) M/s. BESCO Ltd., Calcutta in 1995-96;

(iv) M/s. Titagarh Steels Ltd., Calcutta in 1995-96.

[Translation]

Gauge Conversion

*38. DR. RAM LAKHAN SINGH :
SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDY :

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the details of narrow/metre gauge lines which are being converted into broad gauge at present and proposed to be converted into broad gauge during Eighth and Ninth Plan periods, zone-wise;

(b) whether the Union Government have also received proposals from some State Governments and MPs for conversion of narrow/metre gauge lines into broad gauge during the last two years and current year so far;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) steps taken by the Union Government in this regard?